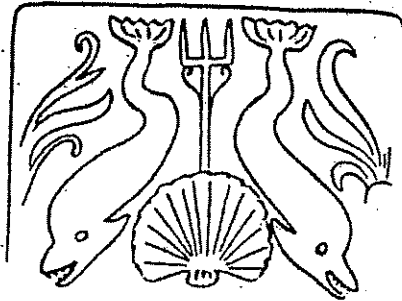


Zeus became the father of many other gods: Athena, the goddess of arts and crafts and defensive war; Apollo, the god of prophecy, medicine, and archery; Artemis, the goddess of the hunt; Hermes, Zeus' messenger; Persephone, the queen of the Underworld; Ares, the god of war; and Hephaestus, the renowned metalsmith.

The rule of the Titans had ended. The rule of the gods had begun.



GREECE: The Creation of Human Beings

After Homer, the next important Greek poet was Hesiod, who lived toward the end of the 8th century B.C. Hesiod wrote a number of myths based upon myths that already existed. He shaped this creation myth so that it would teach people how to lead satisfying lives in their own difficult age.

According to Hesiod, as human beings acquired more technology, their values deteriorated. Therefore, the first, golden race of mortals, which led the most simple life, was the most honorable and the happiest of all the races that Zeus created. They were a peaceful society of farmers, and they worshipped the Great Goddess or Mother Goddess (Mother Earth), who made them and their land fertile. In Greek history, this race conforms most closely to the peoples who inhabited Greece before about 2600 B.C.–2000 B.C., when the Mycenaeans invaded the land.

The bronze race of mortals lived in the Mycenaean Age. This was a time of many wars, including the Trojan War, which is the setting of Homer's *Iliad*. The Mycenaeans were more aggressive and acquisitive than the peoples they encountered when they invaded Greece. They worshipped Zeus, and in their society, the male was more important and more powerful than the female.

Hesiod's description of the race of iron, "our" race, refers to the people living in his own time. You will find it interesting to compare his vision of life in his time with your view of life today.

THE CREATION OF HUMAN BEINGS: THE AGES OF MAN

Zeus, lord of Mount Olympus and father of the deathless gods, was also the father of human beings. The first generation of mortals to inhabit the grain-giving earth was known as the Race of Gold. These mortals were pure in heart and in deed. They respected both their fellow human beings and the deathless gods, and the immortals loved them in return. Because they treated one another justly, they needed neither written laws nor courts nor punishments. They lived carefree and easy lives, in freedom, safety, and peace. Since fear, grief, and hard labor never touched their lives, the passing years did not ravage their appearance or weaken their strength. Old age earned respect and gratitude.

The weather treated the Gold Race kindly, providing the warmth, beauty, and sustenance of an eternal spring. Mortals did not have to work to house or to clothe themselves. Flowing nectar and milk formed their rivers, and the leaves of dwarf oak trees dripped honey. They feasted by gathering the wild grains and fruits that grew abundantly about them, and they leisurely shepherded their flocks of cattle and sheep in lush, green pastures. They had the time and the desire to enjoy the wildflowers that radiantly blossomed in the sunshine and the stars that shone in the night sky.

The Race of Gold had no wish to possess more than it already had. It was neither acquisitive nor aggressive. These mortals did not fashion boats in order to discover what lay beyond the borders of their own land. They did not threaten other human beings, and in return, no one threatened them. They had no need to build defensive walls around their towns. They had no need to possess weapons. They had no armies, and they never heard the sound of a trumpet calling them to battle.

They died as peacefully as they had lived; death came in the form of a gentle sleep. After their bodies became part of the earth, their spirits roamed across the land, hidden by the mists. They protected the living from any danger and taught them how to lead a just life.

When the first generation had passed away, Zeus created a second generation of mortals. They were the Race of Silver, and they were far less virtuous than the Race of Gold. Although their bodies matured with the passage of time, the Silver Race remained juvenile in spirit. For 100 years each child stayed at home with his or her mother, isolated from the companionship and instruction of other human beings. During this time, these mortals devoted their lives solely to the pursuit of childish pleasures.

As a result, the lives of adults in the Silver Race were short and unhappy. They never learned to treat one another with kindness and consideration, and their selfish behavior created injustice and war. They did not respect the deathless gods and made no effort to please them.

Because the Silver Race honored neither gods nor mortals, Zeus became angry with them. The father of gods and mortals changed the weather from eternal spring to a year of four seasons, which ranged from the icy cold of winter to the blistering heat of summer. Caves and sheltered forest areas no longer provided sufficient protection from the weather, so the Silver Race built the first houses.

Food was now less plentiful. The people began to yoke oxen in pairs and drive them across their fields, toiling each day during the growing season, first to plant seeds of corn and later to reap the mature ears. Zeus brought their life on the earth to an early end, and when their bodies became part of the earth, their spirits entered the Underworld.

Then Zeus, father of gods and mortals, created a third generation of mortals, which became known as the Race of Bronze because their weapons and tools were bronze. These mortals were far inferior to the Silver Race because they were so cruel. They loved Ares, god of war, above all the other gods, and they lived by the sword. Their brute strength made them powerful, but their hearts were as unresponsive as the hardest rock.

Despite their strength and power, members of the Bronze Race died young. They brought Black Death upon themselves through endless violence and war. When their bodies became part of the earth, their shades descended into the dark, dismal Underworld, and they left nothing of worth behind to give them a good name.

Next, Zeus created a fourth generation of mortals, which became known as the Race of Heroes. These human beings were more noble and virtuous than the members of the Silver or the Bronze Race. Some of them died in the war against Troy and in other wars, but Zeus placed those who survived upon the islands of the blessed at the ends of the earth. There, the heroes still live along the shore of Oceanus in a land that bears a harvest of honey-sweet fruit three times a year. Grief can no longer touch them; only the honor and glory they earned during their ordinary lifetimes survive. They are ruled by Cronus, whom Zeus freed from his bondage in Tartarus for this purpose.

The fifth generation of mortals that Zeus placed upon the grain-giving earth is our own, the Race of Iron. Now each day is filled with work and with grief, and each night many mortals die. The worst crimes in the history of humanity now occur throughout the world, and yet no mortal feels shame. Justice and faith have left the world; treason and fraud, violence and greed have replaced them.

The Iron Race does not think of others' needs and does not share the bounty of the earth. Instead, we have divided up the earth's surface into a multitude of private properties, and we keep as much as we can for ourselves. We feel that the earth has not provided enough wealth in the grains

she gives, so we have built ships and sailed into the unknown in order to acquire more wealth.

We have torn into the grain-giving earth, searching for the riches she has hidden within her. We have found her secret treasure and have become powerful and wealthy from her deposits of iron and gold. The value of these metals has led to war, and mortal hands have become bloody and they greedily tried to grasp the golden treasures of victory.

If we do not change our ways, our behavior will destroy us. When the time comes that host and guest no longer act hospitably, when friend argues with friend and brothers are enemies, when children and their parents cannot agree with each other, when grown children forget what their parents have done for them and instead treat them with disrespect and dishonor, criticizing them and complaining bitterly because they have grown old and weak, when people who keep their word or are just or virtuous receive less respect than those who use their strength for violent and evil purposes, when those who are evil hurt those who are honorable, then Zeus will destroy our Iron Race, for we will have shown the father of gods and mortals that we are unfit to inhabit the earth that sustains us.

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GREECE: Fertility
Demeter and Persephone

When the agricultural communities in Greece worshipped Mother Earth, different communities called the Great Goddess or the Mother Goddess by different names. This goddess had many names, including Gaea, her daughter Rhea, or Rhea's daughter Demeter. Most of the female divinities in Greek mythology were originally Great Goddesses: Athena in Athens, Hera in Argos, Artemis in Crete, and Aphrodite in Cyprus. Their roles changed when they were incorporated into the male-dominated religion of Zeus.

In an agricultural society, productive soil was of major importance, and the entire community was earth-oriented. The ancient farming peoples observed that plants, animals, and people were born, grew to maturity, and died and that others like them were born again, often the following spring. This became the central focus of the matriarchal religion. Death was an accepted part of the life cycle, for it was followed by rebirth or new life. The people worshipped the Great Goddess to insure the fertility of their fields and themselves, for that would insure that their community would survive.

Demeter, Persephone, and Hades controlled the life cycle in nature. As the goddess of grain, Demeter taught mortals how to plant, raise, and harvest corn, wheat, and barley. Whether Persephone was living with her mother or her husband determined whether the season was one in which the seed sprouted and the crops grew, or whether it was the winter season when the

Underworld. Hades was not only the god of the dead, from which he